

Southwest Sage Grouse Local Working Group
February 26, 2007
Wyoming Game & Fish Office, Green River

Working Group Members Present:

Corby McGinnis, Chris Durham, Don Hartman, Mark Kot, Ron Lockwood, Gavin Lovell and Lucy Wold.

Working Group Members Absent:

Mary Lynn Corbett, Dave Baer, Steve Martin, Bryan Christensen and Vearl Bird.

Guests:

Tom Christiansen, Wyoming Game & Fish Dept.

Public:

No additional persons present

Discussion:

- 1) Reviewed the minutes from the January meeting. The minutes were approved and Lucy will e-mail to Tom C. for the web page.
- 2) Tom handed out a draft copy of the Plan. Tom reminded the Group to be thinking about where their plan might be vulnerable to public scrutiny. Tom reviewed the draft plan with the Group and the following assignments were made:
 - Review the issues ranking and make a case for the issues listed as a “high” priority. (Farming, invasive plants, livestock grazing, recreation, urbanization, energy development, transportation corridors and water development/management.) The narratives do not demonstrate how or why the Group placed the issues as high priority.
 - Any of the text in red color means that more information needs to be added and ideas/thoughts finished.
 - Lucy will get Chris’ write-up on energy development to Tom.
 - Someone needs to write up a paragraph on wind energy and how it affects Southwest Wyoming.
 - Gavin commented that the wind energy map is conservative and should be updated in the next 3-5 years.
 - On page 32 delete the words “sagebrush reserve” 1.1.3 energy sub goal.
 - **On page 32 reword the Energy Development -Education Sub-Goals to read “2.3.1 Promote public education on sage-grouse habitat issues. Educate elected and government officials, project proponents, landowners and the public of the importance of wildlife and its habitat and about strategies that can be used to improve or maintain sage-grouse habitats. Develop and distribute educational materials regarding sage-grouse.” *Basically the two sub goals were combined to reduce redundancy. Please make the change to the entire document under the Education Sub-Goal.**
 - On page 35 there is no detailed maps and or information about weed dispersal under invasive plants. Corby stated that there won’t be any detailed maps from Lincoln County at this time and she doesn’t see it happening any time soon.
 - More work needs to be done in the Urbanization narrative. Mark will get information to Tom. Mark also looked at the Bighorn Basin Plan to use that as a guide.
 - Under the vegetation management section on page 39, Gavin will send Tom one photo of a prescribed burn in which a desired mosaic pattern was achieved.
 - Under the livestock grazing practices beginning on page 43 Tom suggested the Group put a reference to the grazing RMP effort and letter from the Denver group (formerly proposed at a previous meeting) in an appendix at the end of the Plan.
 - Corby had a copy of a letter from the Wyoming State Grazing Board with a flow chart depicting vegetation management for sage-grouse using adaptive management. The Bighorn Basin Working Group developed the flow chart. Lucy will get a copy to those members not at the meeting.

- On page 38, under the recreation narrative, Chris got a BLM definition of off-road highway vehicle (ORHV) and will get that to Tom to include in the Plan.
 - On page 44 under farming, Tom will get the % of land area determined to be farming areas (dry land and irrigated). Corby and Don reminded the group why farming is still listed as a high priority, for many reasons, most importantly, croplands are being converted to smaller lots, flood irrigation methods are being converted to center pivots and the areas are losing riparian and wetland habitats.
 - Don will work on a narrative, run it by Corby and Vearl and get that information to Tom or Lucy.
 - On page 46, the same rewording from the education sub goal on page 32 needs to be added "2.3.1 Promote public education on sage-grouse habitat issues. Educate elected and government officials, project proponents, landowners and the public of the importance of wildlife and its habitat and about strategies that can be used to improve or maintain sage-grouse habitats. Develop and distribute educational materials regarding sage-grouse."
 - On page 49 under wild horse management there needs to be more information on AML's. Chris will get a table to Tom and a short narrative on wild horse management.
 - On page 51 under mining and minerals there needs to be more information on the different mines in the Group's area. *Steve, Chris, Mark and Gavin please put together a list of mines in your area, i.e., trona, gravel, coal etc.
 - Beginning on page 64 under the projects section the Group needs to put more detailed information in the narratives, as they are too vague and must be finalized.
 - From page 70 on in the draft plan is new information, i.e., literature cited, abstract and appendices. *Look through these sections and see what information needs to be added.
 - Don asked Lucy to get a hold of Bryan Christensen and ask if he has any knowledge about habitat improvement projects going on in the Farson/Eden country that would involve sage grouse and or sagebrush conservation.
 - Group members are reminded of the Policy for Evaluating Conservation Efforts (PECE) 2003 Requirement: identifies criteria to be used in determining whether proposed conservation efforts are likely to contribute to improving the habitat and species survival, thereby making the T&E listing unnecessary.
 1. Establishes certainty that the conservation efforts will be implemented and
 2. Establishes certainty that the efforts will be effective.
 - Tom said concerns of conflict of interest could arise inside the working groups during the project submission process. So, the statewide oversight committee has been re-instituted. If a working group member will directly benefit from a project, stay out of the project discussion and ranking so there are no concerns raised at a later date.
- 3) Project Ranking:
- Lucy will use the project implementation flow chart from another working group, add Don's edits and resend to Group to decide if the Group wants to use this flow chart when debating project ranking/funding.
 1. Vermillion Creek (\$5,000.00)
 2. Red Canyon Burn (\$30,000.00)
 3. Fences/Exclosures for guzzlers (\$20,000.00)
 4. SW Hiawatha Flights (\$10,000.00)
 5. Water Trough/Escape Ramps (\$0.00) The Habitat Trust Fund will be paying for these and asked three of the working groups most affected to pay minimal administrative costs. SW Group does not have to expend any funds. The ramps will be made available statewide and may be placed on private or state lands.
 6. Cokeville Meadows Project (Ron is working on this with manager Carl Millegen) CM sells hay to cover water rights. The plan would be to use CM lands in the fall for grazing to take the pressure off BLM lands and allow for more forage for wildlife.
- 4) The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, March 26, 2007** at the Game and Fish Office in Green River.